

Law.com: Kroll Ontrack Compass Points Out ESI for EDD

By: John K. Waters, December 27, 2010

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Kroll Ontrack's Compass is a relatively young enterprise e-mail and file archiving solution. Launched in February at LegalTech New York 2010, Ontrack Compass was designed specifically for legal and IT teams that need to prepare for, and respond to, litigation, investigations, and regulatory requirements.

There are other products available from the likes of **Commvault** and **EMC**, "but most of them were built principally with IT in mind," says George May, Kroll's executive vice president of product strategy. "Compass was built from the ground up with the needs of legal or compliance folks in mind."

Kroll Ontrack's slogan for its newest product, "archiving powered by legal intelligence," is particularly apropos. Ontrack had been in the ESI business for almost 20 years when Kroll acquired it back in 2002. Kroll was well known for its investigation, intelligence, security, and risk mitigation consulting services; Ontrack was a highly regarded provider of data recovery, electronic discovery, and computer forensics services.

Ontrack Compass was developed for Lotus Notes and Microsoft Exchange as an interactive archiving system with record-retention, compliance-management, and litigation hold features aiming to preserve data as evidence. It includes a range of search capabilities and supports long-term storage and management of ESI.

In a nutshell, the tool was designed to capture and render searchable several types of data -- word processing documents, spreadsheets, e-mail -- which are the fastest growing data types. Unstructured data can be very tough to manage and mine, because it hasn't been sliced and diced into the neat rows and columns of a relational database.

The Ontrack Compass tool captures e-mail in two ways: compliance capture, which uses the Microsoft Exchange journaling feature to snag all traffic going in and out of an organization's mail store; and an approach the company calls "operational capture," which finds messages after they are delivered and pushes them into the archive. As documents are ingested into the archive, they're tagged with categories that carry retention policies. For example, you might have a "general office matters" category that includes messages like "out of office" or "Pizza in the lunchroom!" Those you might want to retain for only a couple of days. Messages in, say, a "patent" category would probably include documents you'd want to keep for years.

Ontrack Compass also supports concurrent litigation holds on archived documents, and allows users to release them in a granular fashion to keep the organization's database from being stuffed with unneeded info. The tool's compression and de-duplication technology also helps to keep the overall data footprint small.

The Compass archive technology uses a flat file system like a records management platform. This system allows search results to be displayed as they are located; no waiting until an entire database is searched.

By providing a single-instance store for all ingested data, the product not only reduces an organization's storage footprint, but also minimizes the role IT is required to play. The company claims that compliance

and legal teams can use the tool to locate and manage data for investigations with minimal impact on IT resources. Data stored in the archive can be exported to other types of tools (such as [Ontrack InView](#)) or to outside counsel for review. Automated document retention policies can be implemented and changed as regulations evolve.

Because the Compass architecture is not limited by the constraints of a relational database, it has the flexibility to scale dramatically. And the company has emphasized its capacity and power to be deployed in very large implementations -- enterprises with as many as 100,000 e-mail users and more.

But it's also a very lawyer-friendly system, with drop-down menus and wizards to make life easier for the many non-techies who need to search their firm's archives. The interface is clean, open, and well designed.



Figure 1. Compass user interface assigning an owner to custodian data.

In October, the company released version 2.1 of the product with a number of enhancements, the most compelling of which is a new Custodian-Foldered Output feature. Custodian-foldered output is industry jargon for the ability of the archive to organize an output package into folders by custodian to speed up discovery processing. Each custodian folder contains all of the messages, files, and attachments for each custodian relevant to a certain matter.

"Typically, archives de-duplicate or [apply] single-instance [technology to] attachments, files, and sometimes messages across the output set," says Kaitlin Shinkle, a senior manager in Kroll Ontrack's Worldwide Brand Communications group. "Discovery vendors spend nearly half of their processing time re-assembling the content for each custodian. Custodian-foldered output de-duplicates within a custodian folder, but not across custodian folders. For example, if a message with an attachment was sent to several of the custodians in the case, that message and attachment would be included in each of the custodian folders. Thus, custodian-foldered output enables discovery processing to get done in half the time to get to document review sooner."

Version 2.1 also allows legal teams to generate litigation hold notifications from within the archive at the point where the legal hold can be implemented. Authorized users can manage legal hold templates and notifications across multiple matters, and generate e-mail notices informing identified custodians that they have a legal duty to preserve any and all material with respect to a particular matter.



Figure 2. Compass Legal Hold Notification Portal.

The new version of the tool also seeks to accommodate what Kroll sees as the largest growing source of discoverable enterprise content: Microsoft SharePoint Server. The new Ontrack Compass Archive for SharePoint allows users to archive documents, wikis, and blogs stored on the popular portal platform. It also supports migration of older versions of documents from the SharePoint Server to the archive. Also new in this release: support for Microsoft Exchange Server 2010.

This release also comes with a new instant messaging archive: Ontrack Compass Archive for Instant Messages. IM has become a commonplace for communication in most enterprises, and a growing number are discovering that they need to archive these interactions. This feature allows companies to archive employee IM conversations in a single, central location to ensure that relevant data can be produced for regulatory requests, litigation, and investigations.

In November, the company extended the reach of its Compass tools into the cloud with a new online discovery repository service designed to allow users to locate and search for potentially important evidence data by keyword, custodian, date range, and content type. Billed as the industry's first hosted service of its kind, [Ontrack Guardian](#) is built on Ontrack Compass and designed around the [Electronic Discovery Reference Model](#).

Compass originally targeted medium- to large-sized corporations with large litigation risks and government entities that are heavily regulated. But it has expanded that focus to include a range of enterprises. The company is also promoting its support services for these products, which includes and implementation support, step-by-step guidance in the use of the product, and ongoing technical support.